

**Washington, DC**-Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23), a member of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, today touted the passage of his legislation aimed at reducing border violence by cracking down on illegal gunrunning. In April, Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) introduced similar legislation in the Senate. Rodriguez's legislation passed as part of the President's Merida Initiative.

"Criminals and terrorists are getting more savvy, smarter, and playing dirtier than ever before," said Rodriguez. "That's why it was necessary to add funding, as my bipartisan legislation did in this initiative, to stop the illegal trafficking of guns into Mexico from the United States. This is a necessary step we must take to save lives and stop the violence taking place in communities on both sides of the border."

Of the bill Sen. Hutchison has said, "This legislation will allow the ATF to establish new teams dedicated to disrupting gun smugglers, improve the training of Mexican law enforcement, and hire additional agents in Mexico to improve our ability to trace seized firearms."

Rodriguez's bill was inserted in to the President's Merida initiative, which would offer as much as \$400 million in military equipment and technical assistance this year to help Mexico in an intensifying war against drug traffickers that has spilled into U.S. territory. Mexico reported nearly 500 drug-related killings in May and more guns are traced back to Texas than any other state, according to the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

The Rodriguez portion would authorize \$15 million in fiscal years 2008 through 2010 to expand the U.S. Department of Justice's Project Gunrunner Initiative, ATF's southwest border initiative to deprive drug traffickers of firearms and reduce firearms-related violence on both sides of the border.

The funding would enable the ATF to hire, train and deploy an additional 80 special agents, enough for at least seven more Project Gunrunner Teams in the border region to investigate and help prosecute individuals that traffic weapons into Mexico.

The bill also authorizes \$9.5 million in fiscal years 2008 through 2010 to enhance cooperation between the United States and Mexico. This funding would allow ATF to assign an additional 12 agents to consulates in Mexico to support Mexico's efforts to trace seized weapons and to train Mexican law enforcement officials in anti-trafficking investigative techniques.

According to the ATF, most of the firearms violence in Mexico is perpetrated by drug traffickers who are vying for control of drug trafficking routes to the United States and engaging in turf battles for disputed distribution territories.

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*Congressman* **Ciro D. Rodriguez** (TX-23) serves as a Member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee. For more information about Rodriguez, see his website at [rodriguez.house.gov](http://rodriguez.house.gov) .